ASSIGNMENT: Research Methods Chapter (outside reading)

You are responsible for designing advertising for a new digital audiotape machine. Because of the new technology and the fact that many consumers may not believe some of the claims you want to make (even though they are supported by engineering studies), you propose spending additional funds to use expert and highly credible spokespeople in your advertising. You are asked, however, to provide evidence to justify these expenditures, or they will not be made. You will need to demonstrate that consumers' responses to the claims will be more favorable if such spokespeople are used in the advertising. Your task is to design such a study.

1. Consider two study options that are proposed by research suppliers:

   A. Introduce the digital audio tape machine in a test market. For the first month use ads without a high credibility/expert spokesperson. For the second month use ads with a high credibility/expert spokesperson. Compare the sales figures to see which ad is more effective. Based on the reading, are there any threats to the validity of this study? Be specific about such problems: how do they apply to this study?

   B. Run a consumer survey. Read people a list of the claims you intend to make. Ask people how likely they are to believe the claims: (1) if the company made them, and (2) if the particularly high credibility/expert spokesperson you are considering made them on behalf of the company. Are there specific problems associated with this study design? Are there different ways to run this survey to overcome such problems? (Do not discuss survey research in general—closed-end versus open-end questions, sampling, etc.)

2. Design and develop an experiment that would provide better evidence. Begin by stating your guiding hypothesis in as clear a fashion as possible. To do this, identify the independent and dependent variables and what you expect the effect of the former to be on the latter. How will you manipulate the independent variable? What will be your operational definition of a "more favorable response" to the advertising? Describe the research design and procedures you will use to test your hypothesis.

3. While planning the experiment you learn that management is considering a change in marketing strategy. The revised plan would place the ads in technical magazines read primarily by highly knowledgeable consumers until the product becomes better established. Later on the product would be marketed to more of a mass audience. How would you modify your experiment to provide evidence as to whether the presence/absence of expert/credible spokespeople would impact differently on these two groups of consumers? Would it be better to rely on some measurement of consumer knowledge in selecting or assigning people to the experiment, or would you prefer to create different levels of consumer knowledge prior to exposing people to the manipulation of the independent variable?
ASSIGNMENT: Consumer Socialization (Chapter 16)

The type of consumer socialization (page 400) that goes on within families is referred to as intergenerational influence. Describe how these intergenerational influences have affected your behavior as a consumer. What behavior patterns were handed down to you (consider both direct socialization efforts in your home and indirect observation) that continued to influence your consumer behavior after you left home to attend college? Consider not only what you have been led to purchase but how you approach the role of being a consumer (both in general and in specific product domains). Is that intergenerational influence likely to be as important for you in the future? Explain why or why not.

ASSIGNMENT: Diffusion of Innovations (Chapter 19)

Consider your family's first time purchase of (what for them is) a new and different product -- an innovation. This is not, however, a “new” replacement product (e.g., replacing the family car). It can range from a major technological advance (e.g., VCR, cordless phone) to a substantially new version of a product concept that has been around for a while. What type of innovation was this (see page 481)? Identify the key characteristics of the innovation (see the discussion starting on page 494) that played important roles on either the likelihood or rate (speed) of adoption for this product. Explain how these characteristics impacted your family’s adoption process.

ASSIGNMENT: Categorizing and Comprehending Information (Chapter 5)

The chapter defines a brand extension on page 108. In essence, the “family brand name” is placed on a product in order to generate inferences (e.g., regarding quality, price, ingredients) for a product that a firm wishes to introduce. Many times these inferences are favorable to the marketer and lead to greater acceptance for the new product than would otherwise be the case. However, sometimes the inferences are not favorable. Indeed, sometimes the family brand name is weakened by the extension.

Visit a supermarket or other store selling a wide variety of merchandise. While there identify one example of successful family branding -- in terms of the inferences it led you to make about an addition to the brand family -- and one example of unsuccessful family branding. What key inferences were generated in each case and why? What steps should the firm with the unsuccessful family brand extension take to overcome the problem?
ASSIGNMENT: Consumer Attitudes (Chapter 6)

This assignment is based on the expectancy-value model discussion on page 136 and the measures used in the TORA model (see page 138-139). For this assignment we will focus on the prediction of $A_{ACT}$ and skip the SN part of the model. Your group should reach agreement on the information needed for steps 1 and 2 below. Following that, each person should separately provide the information needed in steps 3 through 7 below. Rely entirely on the data for steps 8-10.

1. Identify two cars (makes and models) that you think are fairly similar. Next, identify three cars that are moderately different (in various ways) from both of these. Place the names of these five makes and models of cars as column headings in a table.

2. Assume you have just graduated from college and have accepted an attractive job offer. Congratulations! You are now in the market for a new car. Decide what automobile characteristics / purchase consequences (e.g., aspects of performance, appearance, cost) you believe constitute salient beliefs, and list these as rows in this same table. (For this exercise, 5-7 salient beliefs would be fine.)

3. Assume you were going to buy one of these cars. Rank order the 5 cars in terms of your overall attitude toward buying each, with 5 being the most preferred and 1 being the least preferred.

4. Provide your set of evaluative ratings ($e_i$) for each salient belief (e.g., owning a safe car).

5. For each salient belief, assess the likelihood ($b_i$) that this outcome will occur (or benefit will be realized) if you purchased each of the five cars that appear in the table.

6. Calculate your attitude toward buying each of these cars ($A_{ACT}$) as indicated at the top of page 139. (Note that you are not considering the subjective norm (SN) portion of the TORA model in this assignment.)

7. Take the role of a consumer in a very different demographic/life cycle category (with respect to age, family situation, income, etc.) and describe this person in a sentence or two. Repeat steps three through six for this consumer.

8. How useful would this type of data (assuming a sound consumer survey) be in predicting peoples' brand preferences (and possibly behavior)? Did this assignment produce any evidence for this opinion?

9. Assume the data you generated came from a large nationwide sample. First, consider the similarities and differences in scores as a function of person-to-person differences. What insights does this give you that should be important to these car manufacturers? Provide specific examples from your data.

10. Next, consider the similarities and differences in scores as a function of car-to-car differences. Using the data, give some specific examples as to how this research might guide a marketing/advertising program. (Take the role of a marketing executive for several car companies in thinking about what the data is telling you.)
ASSIGNMENT: Individual Differences and Market Segmentation (Part I) (Chapter 17)

This is part one of a two-part assignment. In an overall sense, what you will be doing is identifying some fairly basic need, value or personality trait and carrying out a research study to see whether people who have different levels of that individual difference variable are led to behave differently as consumers.

Part one (i.e., this assignment) consists of selecting some need, value or personality trait identified in this chapter or in Exhibit 3.6, stating a hypothesis regarding how it may affect a consumer's behavior and developing measures to assess the resulting behavior (i.e., its presence or frequency). Part two will focus on the measurement of the individual difference variable itself and the collection of data to test your hypothesis.

Choose the need, value or trait carefully by thinking about how likely each is to be expressed in a person's consumer behavior.

1. Choose one of these needs, values or traits that, if strong or heightened, will affect some aspect of consumer behavior (e.g., what is purchased, how a consumer responds to particular advertising appeals).

2. State a hypothesis indicating the relationship between high and low levels of the individual difference variable and its resulting effect on consumer behavior (e.g., "People who have higher levels of need "X" will eat more hot dogs; buy Palm Pilots; switch channels more often.")

3. Since some of these relationships don’t appear to make good sense, explain why you think the need, value or trait you identified could have that specific effect on a consumer's behavior. Discuss whether or not you think there are substantial and enduring differences in the strength of that need, value or trait across people, or whether most people have about the same level, though its strength varies depending on situational factors.

4. For today's assignment assume that you will be able to identify people who have higher (and lower) levels of that need (i.e., you will deal with that issue in part two of the assignment). Your focus, here, is only on the dependent variable and how you will measure it. What will you do to determine if their consumer behavior was consistent with what you predicted it would be? Be specific. Could you simply observe what they did; is that practical? If not, develop a set of survey questions that will allow you to determine whether their behavior was consistent with your prediction. ("How many hot dogs did you eat last week?")
ASSIGNMENT: Individual Differences and Market Segmentation (Part II)

(1) Develop 5 to 10 items designed to measure the need, value or personality trait you selected in Part I. To do this think about questions you would like to ask people if you wanted to know whether they had a high level of the particular need, value or personality trait. Imagine you are a “detective” interviewing the respondent. Consider what questions you would ask that would provide strong clues as to the strength of that particular need, value or personality trait. You cannot simply ask the person for a self-rating (e.g. “would you say you are an introvert or an extrovert?”) on the need, value or trait both because the person may not have thought enough about it (and so may not know) and because you may not get a truthful response to such a direct question. Questionnaire items can deal with opinions, preferences, activities, interests or anything you think indicates the strength of that need, value or trait. (“When I have free time I prefer to spend it….”) Each item will require a response along an "agree-disagree," "always-never" or some similar continuum. Beware of items that people will give the same response to for very different reasons, having nothing to do with that need, value or trait. It is also very important to avoid “circularity.” That is, your assessment of the strength of a person’s need, value or trait must be broadly based (i.e., must truly capture that aspect of the person), rather than narrowly linked to the consumer behavior you are trying to predict.

(2) Gather the data you need to test the hypothesis you developed in the previous assignment. To do this you need to combine two separate sets of items in one questionnaire: (1) the individual difference-assessment inventory described above and, (2) the measures you developed in the previous assignment to assess the consumer behavior of interest. To be sure that your small and unrepresentative sample contains people who are high as well as low on the need you selected, deliberately pick half who you think are likely to be high and half who you think are likely to be low. Administer the total questionnaire to six people per study team member.

(3) Graph your data relating scores on the individual difference-assessment inventory (i.e., the independent variable) to scores on the consumer behavior of interest (i.e., the dependent variable). Every person, in essence, becomes a point defined by their scores on the two variables. Discuss and evaluate the relationship you found. Was your hypothesis confirmed: did the "highs" display different consumer behavior than the "lows"? Based on what you have learned, why do you think your results turned out the way they did?
ASSIGNMENT: High Effort Decision Making (Chapter 10)

For a recent purchase of moderate to high effort recall how you viewed the decision after the problem recognition stage as well as some amount of internal search (review pages 199-209). However, external search would have only been achieved by means of "incidental learning" (e.g., seeing ads, recalling what someone said). So, thinking back to how things stood at that time, translate this into an attributes (columns)-by-alternatives (rows) matrix. You may have been able to fill in some of the cells with preliminary product information at that time, but probably not all. Include that initial matrix with your assignment.

(1) In a few paragraphs, describe how you managed to move from this initial structure of your decision problem to a final solution and purchase. Start by thinking about the following questions. How did you go about "filling in" the cell entries? Did the structure of the matrix itself change in any way as you moved closer to a decision?

(2) After doing this indicate the extent to which you followed a definite "processing by attributes" (i.e., picking attributes and looking across brands) or "processing by brands" (i.e., picking brands and looking across attributes) strategy.

(3) Which of the cognitive models discussed on pages 229-235 did you use? Explain your use of these decision rules in relation to the matrix you have provided. (See the discussion on pages 238-244).

ASSIGNMENT: Marketing and Social Responsibility (Chapter 21)

A broad social criticism of marketing and advertising focuses not on a single product or advertising campaign, but on more pervasive effects of marketing and advertising on values, conceptions of self and others as well as harmful behaviors. Such criticism takes into account, for example, the amount of time a typical child spends in front of a TV set relative to other socialization influences and institutions as well as special vulnerabilities of certain population segments.

(1) Identify the major set of such concerns raised in Chapter 21. Assess whether marketing and advertising play an important role either in creating or reinforcing each of these negative outcomes and indicate whether marketing and advertising deserve substantial blame, a small amount of blame or almost no blame for each. A simple listing is all that is required here.

(2) Pick two of the above concerns (choose one that you have placed in the “substantial blame” category and one that you have placed in the “almost no blame” category, assuming you have entries in both categories) and indicate your reasons for assigning each to these categories. What specific and realistic steps would you like to see taken and by whom to improve that aspect of marketing system performance?